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Farm and Home Development

Highlights



No. 4 -- March, 1959

10 STATE FHD REVIEW The report of the 10-State review of FHD made by FES staff members last year will be mailed to State Extension Directors this month. It will also be discussed at the spring regional directors' meetings. You'll recall that this review was requested by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy. The 10 States taking part and the procedures used in making the review were reported in the last issue of the FHD newsletter.

The report analyzes FHD experiences of the 10 States in detail. It emphasizes progress and problems and reveals significant implications for Extension. Several directors have asked that members of the FES study teams review the findings with appropriate members of their staffs. Visual aids have been prepared for use in these discussions.

We used the report as the basis for a productive seminar for our staff last month and found it quite helpful. We hope it will stimulate other States to make a comparable analysis of their FHD progress and problems.

FHD REFERENCE BOOK The Arkansas staff has assembled the most complete FHD reference book for agents that we've seen in a long time. The 200-some pages in the looseleaf book are grouped under 48 edge-indexed sections for easy reference. Information is well-chosen and presented. This excellent reference book points up the importance of staff involvement and teamwork in FHD work. Assembling and presenting the information in a condensed form was clearly a whole-staff job.

NEW FES PUBLICATION Credit In Management of the Farm and and Home is the title of a 19-page mimeographed publication (AEP-9 -- 1-30-59) available upon request from the FES. Credit is discussed in a way that should be helpful in planning work

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with families. Possibilities and principles of credit use are discussed, examples of family use of credit are shown, and means for computing credit costs are described.

MAKING FHD MORE EFFECTIVE A recent New York study of one county's Farm and Home Management program reveals some of the problems agents and families face in FHD work. It also points up the value of such studies for county program planning. The study was made in Dutchess County by County Agent Oren A. Burbank.

Even though the work hasn't been underway long enough to provide a full picture of it's possibilities, Burbank feels the study shows some real progress and points out how improvements can be made in working with farm families.

Past efforts have been very effective in helping families discover strong and weak points in their operations, reports Burbank, "but we find that helping families make needed correction takes more than two years." Burbank concludes from replies to a questionnaire sent to cooperators that:

1. Most families think chiefly of the physical factors in their business, such as size of business, feed and labor supply.
2. To date, only about one-fourth have been influenced to make changes.
3. The greatest effect of the program is seen in increased labor efficiency.
4. Only a few cooperators consider financing, market demands, machinery and equipment needs....and most important...present and future family needs, in their planning.

"The study revealed to us," says Burbank, "that our program needs to be changed in the direction of money management and long-time planning for family needs."

Studies such as Burbank's help point the way for more effective work with farm families. His was quite thorough, but even simpler ones often uncover clues that led to more productive extension work.

A COUNTY AGENT'S VIEW When asked what kind of help he wanted from specialists on FHD work, an experienced Utah agent replied "Three kinds, primarily. I want specialists to:

- "1. teach me the solution of problems that fall within their field. A specialist can't be everywhere at once and problems won't wait. It's only logical that he can spread his efforts best by training us, rather than coming on call.
- "2. teach me how to teach others to solve problems. This is a very different matter from knowing simply how to solve the problem. The teaching techniques and aids our specialists have developed for us have been mighty useful.
- "3. give us recommendations that clearly fit with recommendations of other specialists. This is important if we are to avoid confusing the people we serve. For example, if dairy specialists in their zeal for quality hay recommended cutting alfalfa two weeks earlier than do the agronomists who are thinking of maintaining stands, the farmer wonders who is right.

"In developing recommendations, compromises are often necessary. It seems to me the specialists are the logical ones to make this adjustment."

ALABAMA MEASURES PROGRESS An Alabama summary of FHD progress impresses us in two major respects. First, the importance of recording family accomplishments stands out. Second, the yardsticks used for measuring progress are simple and significant.

The 23 points covered in the questionnaire are broken into three major areas: general information, farm business, and home and family. A fourth section summarizes family accomplishments. A report of the survey which summarizes progress of 1,255 families is written up in Alabama FHD Letter Number 6. Title of the survey is "Summary of Changes Made by Families Participating in Farm and Home Development."

WHAT DO FAMILIES WANT Speaking of studies, a recent Arkansas survey of 2,182 FHD families sheds considerable light on the kind of extension help farm families want and need. The biggest demand of agents was for help in analyzing current problems and reaching decisions. Some 1,557 families obtained such help on farm problems; 1,112 with home problems.

Clear instances of learning to make wise decisions were reported by 1,286 families; analyzing resources by 1,280 families. Help in developing short-time goals were reported by 1,379 families, and help with long-time goals by 928 families.

On the business side, 1,298 families have kept more detailed farm accounts and 901 families better home accounts since starting FHD. Agents report that "appreciation for the value of records grows among families with FHD experience." Some 1,209 families used their records in making decisions, even to the point that 167 quit farming.

More than 180 families requested Extension help on father-son agreements; 308 on rental agreements; 275 on wills; 554 on insurance; and 823 on the use of credit. Help in reaching decisions on purchasing land was reported by 187 families and on renting land by 365 families, while practically all families received help on increasing yields and cutting costs.

The family living side was not neglected. Nutrition problems were dealt with through (1) better meal planning by 925 families, (2) food supply planning by 690 families, (3) estimating food costs by 647 families, and (4) planned food production by 786 families. Through better planning and use of equipment, 577 families improved labor efficiency in the home.

NEWS NOTES *Washington State will repeat its 4-week FHD course this summer. Instructors will be Dr. A. E. Peterson, Lila Dickerson, and E. J. Kreizinger. Dates are June 15 to July 10.

*Alabama's S. R. Doughty, Land Use Specialist, has started an FHD newsletter to agents. Several other States have regular FHD newsletters to agents. It's a good way to exchange new ideas, report FHD developments, and inspire agents.

*FHD work received a real boost in a recent center-spread picture story in the Rota section of the Ft. Wayne, Indiana, News Sentinel. Short captions with lively pictures graphically portray how FHD work is helping 130 families in the county attain a better living.